

Handicapped to be considered in building design

Physically handicapped persons, particularly those confined to wheel chairs, will be able to come and go and exist more easily in most new buildings in California as a result of legislation requiring special design features for the handicapped.

The measure, signed recently by Gov. Ronald Reagan (R), applies to most types of privately owned buildings containing more than 10,000 sq ft. Included are hotels, motels, convention and exposition centers, auditoriums and office buildings. The construction industry did not oppose the bill when it was in the legislature.

It will become effective some time in 1972, or more specifically, the 91st day after the legislature adjourns. The body is expected to remain in session until late this month.

The measure does not apply to existing buildings or buildings now under construction. But after the law takes effect, nearly all new buildings in the state will have to include special design features for the handicapped.

In 1968, California enacted a law requiring that all buildings financed in whole or in part by public funds have

special design features for the handicapped. The following year, the law was broadened to include privately owned buildings offering "public accommodations or facility." This brought in theaters, restaurants, and stadiums.

The laws requiring the special design do not set the requirements, generally requiring that buildings include features specified in Section A-117.1 of the code of American National Standards Institute (ANSI). This is not a mandatory standard, but one of the many models written by ANSI as a guide to industry and government.

The California statutes generally require the design standards recommended in the ANSI code, although there are some departures, such as a thinner grab bar in toilets than described by the ANSI standard.

ANSI's model code includes the following provisions:

- Ramps with nonslip surfaces.
- At least one primary entrance to each building usable by persons in wheel chairs.
- Door widths of at least 32 in.
- Floors with a nonslip surface.

ABM construction, development to move ahead

Two obstacles slowing both development and construction on the \$7-billion Safeguard antiballistic missile (ABM) system have begun to crumble.

Despite protests and court challenges, President Nixon has given the go-ahead for detonation at Amchitka Island in the Aleutians of a 5-megaton warhead, for Safeguard's Spartan interceptor missile. Uproar over possibly creating seismic ocean waves and venting radioactive gases as a result of the test threw the test schedule off almost a month. Environmentalists were denied a court stay of the test, however, they contend the Atomic Energy Commission has not complied with the Environmental Policy Act and continue to seek the release of documents allegedly detailing potential dangers.

The Construction Industry Stabilization Committee approved a compromise wage agreement between the building trades and a joint venture headed by Peter Kiewit Sons' Co., Omaha, to break an eight-month impasse and start the work for construction to begin at the second Safeguard site, located near Great Falls, Mont.

The Amchitka site preparations involved drilling a \$12-million 5,875-ft-deep hole and lining it with steel casing (ENR 6/26/69 p. 15). The detonation there of the largest nuclear device to be tested underground by the U.S. will probably represent the zenith of the U.S. underground nuclear test program and signal the start of a business decline for contractors specializing in work for the tests.

Following the blast, there will be no other foreseeable need to test large warheads. The Spartan's warhead, equivalent in power to 5 million tons of TNT and 250 times the power of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, is the largest in explosive capacity required for the present generation of nuclear weapons.

After Amchitka, testing will return to the Nevada range and will revert to low yields. Moreover, pressures will build on the Nixon administration in the wake of the Amchitka blast to redouble efforts at negotiating an agreement with Russia to ban most future underground tests. Nuclear testing already is forbidden by treaty in the atmosphere, space or underwater.